

Have you ever been asked, “Do you know God?” Or maybe you hear someone say, “I know God.” Just what do people mean when they speak of knowing God? Is it that they know His name and believe that He created the world and all that is therein? Is man’s belief in the Bible the same as knowing God? In this lesson we will not be dealing with proving the existence of God. Our aim will not be to prove that God is. Rather, we will be discussing the need for a personal knowledge and relationship with Him. Before his conversion, Paul knew who God was but did not KNOW God. Even though he had a good knowledge of the Old Law, he had spent his life opposing the very thing Old Testament scripture prophesied. His aim was to overthrow the promise God had made (Genesis 3:15). He worked tirelessly with a “good conscience” as he went about persecuting the Lord’s way (Acts 9:1-5).

New Testament scripture tells us that eternal life is equated with knowing the Lord (John 17:3). We are living in a time when men have greater access to Bible knowledge than any other time in history. Millions of copies of God’s word are distributed throughout the world every year, and yet many still do not KNOW God. They read ABOUT Him and believe that He is but never come to truly know Him. Knowing God is more than simply believing information about Him. I have had people tell me they knew my dad. The casual acquaintance could recognize his face, know his name and could tell something about his life. However, facts about him did not mean they knew him. I knew him through close and intimate association. I knew him because I spent time with him, learned about him, grew to love and appreciate all that he was willing to do for me. I knew him because he taught me and instilled in me his values and views about how to live a proper and good life.

In this lesson, we will observe what it means to really know God, some consequences associated with not knowing Him and the many blessings which come from truly knowing our heavenly Father.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW GOD?

Recently I read an article that spoke of finding a new way to know God. The article urged the reader to know God by personal experiences. The idea was to “meditate” and receive these experiences. Some have said “I know God, because I felt Him.” I do not presume to say I understand all that is implied in these views, but I do know they are not founded upon sound Bible teaching. There are others whose view of knowing God is to read and memorize Bible passages. In his book “Knowing God,” J. I. Packer said, “Disregard the study of God, and you sentence yourself to stumble and blunder through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.” (*Knowing God, Pub. 1973*) Of course, we would agree that we must study to keep from wandering through life in darkness. However, there is a vast difference in knowing Bible verses and knowing God.

James wrote, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). Concerning the phrase “the devils also believe,” Robertson’s Word Pictures says, “The demons also believe (kai ta daimonia pisteuousin). They go that far (the same verb pisteuo). They never doubt the fact of God’s existence.” Surely we can see that just having KNOWLEDGE of a subject alone is not the same as KNOWING the subject. The devil knows who God is, but he does not know God. To KNOW God is to obey Him (1 John 2:3-4; Titus 1:15-16).

Knowing God requires diligent study of His word, the acceptance of that word and obedience to His will for us. In fact, in 1 John 2:3-6, we are told that obedience is positive proof of our knowing Him. Notice Verse 3: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” How do we know we know Him? By being obedient to His commandments! We know that we know him if we keep his commandments. The word “keep” is present subjunctive, which means “if we keep on keeping his commandments.” We can, therefore, know whether we are in fellowship with and know God if we continue to be obedient to his will. Our actions can betray our claim to know God; Titus 1:16 “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” Jesus made it plain when He said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). This passage shows that it is possible for one to recognize Jesus as Lord and still miss the kingdom of heaven.

To know God requires knowledge of His word and the demonstration of our faith by obedience to that word. We cannot and do not deny the fact that we can know there is a God through His creation. Romans 1:20 teaches that we can know something about God and His power by observing the natural things around us. In a comment concerning this verse in Romans, James Boyd made this observation, “Nature declares God is, and the Bible teaches who He is....”

To answer our question, “What does it mean to know God,” we would do well to remember how God’s people forgot Him. We read in Hosea 8:2-3, “Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him;” Hosea 8:14, “For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.” To know God is to hear Him, love Him and obey His commandments.

### EXAMPLES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NOT KNOWING GOD

We have already noted some passages which speak of consequences when men will not properly know God (Hosea 8:23, 14; Matthew 7:21; Titus 1:16). But let us look a little further into scripture and note other passages that show the

consequences set aside for those who will not know God.

First we read in Exodus 5:2 of a powerful ruler, who said I know not God. Pharaoh said, “...Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.” This king, who was a “god” unto himself made it clear that he did not recognize the authority of Jehovah. This led him to shake his fist in the face of Almighty God. Of course, we know that ultimately he will come to realize that the God of Israel was all powerful. God’s answer to him came in Exodus 9:14 “For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.” Even today there are many who are still shaking their fists in the face of God by saying, “I know what the Bible says, but I do not think that applies to me.” Or they believe that disobedience will be overlooked. With this mindset these, do not know God any better than Pharaoh did.

Judges 2:10 gives a sad commentary for the children of Israel. God had provided for Israel’s welfare over and over again. Yet here they are a people classed as those who “knew not the Lord.” When the faithful leaders passed into eternity, the people turned Away for God. They were so devoted to worldly things and so intent on satisfying the desires of the flesh (1 John 2:15-17), that they forgot the true God, and quickly bowed down to false gods and their abominable superstitions. By their ungodly actions they “provoked the LORD to anger” (Vs. 12).

The sons of Eli “...knew not the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:12). These men were identified as the “sons of Belial” and were the leaders of ungodliness in Israel (1 Samuel 2:24). Their conduct is made clear in 1 Samuel 2:13-17, for they caused the people to abhor the Lord’s offering. Eli, when he was old, heard no good report concerning his sons. He said they had “made the Lord’s people to transgress” (1 Samuel 2:24).

What happens when a nation turns from God and will not know Him? Israel is a prime example of such. They turned away from following the Lord and were carried into captivity. In 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar takes Israel captive (2 Kings 24:10; Daniel 1:1-2). America would do well to learn from these people who forgot God. We would be wise to ask, “Do we have a generation that does not know the Lord?” The Proverb writer said, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). The Psalmist said it this way, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance” (Psalm 33:12).

### TO KNOW GOD BRINGS GREAT BLESSINGS.

The blessings associated with knowing God are wonderful and beneficial. Enoch is a good example of one who knew God. Scripture tells us that “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Genesis 5:22-24). Concerning Enoch, Hebrews 11:5 further states; “By faith Enoch was translated that

he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Verse 6 in Hebrews 11 shows the importance of faith. From this event in Enoch's life, we can conclude that when he obeyed the Lord (putting into practice his faith) he pleased God. Therefore, if we are to please God, we must "walk with Him" (2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 John 1:7), and in so doing, we can rightfully say, "I KNOW GOD."

**When we KNOW God, we have a "peace that passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7).** Even in the face of great persecution, those who know God have a kind of peace the world does not enjoy. The mind of men cannot fully understand this kind of peacefulness. In the early days of the church, those who persecuted her could not understand how the Christians could face impending death with such resolve and faithfulness. Today, God's faithful can face their troubles, trials and uncertainties with the same disposition. Truly this kind of peace is a gift of God, but it must be cultivated by the individual. The peace of God will keep (guard) our hearts. "The Greek word for "guard" is a military term, signifying a sentinel who keeps guard over a castle or camp, or a well-garrisoned stronghold (Isaiah 26:1-3). This word is used only in three other places in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 11:32; Galatians 3:23; 1 Peter 1:5). The peace of God serves as a sentinel or well-garrisoned stronghold to keep one's thoughts and their source protected from everything that would produce anxiety. Thus the promise here is that the praying Christian who relies on the care and protection of God shall have peace secure within, whatever outward troubles may besiege" (Tolle, p.69). This peace comes ONLY to those who KNOW God.

**When we know God, we have true contentment.** We read of Paul's contentment; "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). According to Thayer's Greek Definitions the word "content" in this passage means "contented with one's lot, with one's means, though the slenderest." The Greek word for "content," autarkes, appears only here in the New Testament. It literally means "self-sufficient." He did not claim that his self-sufficiency originated with himself, that it was of his own wisdom or power. The apostle was independent of circumstances, thus self-sufficient, because of his dependence on the Lord. He was only self-sufficient so far as Christ dwelt in him..." (Tolle, pp.72f). The contentment to which Paul refers is "great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). This is a promised blessing, which is enjoyed by those who walk with God (Hebrews 13:5). One of the secrets of contentment is having the knowledge that we truly do know God.

**KNOWING God also gives great assurance.** We sometimes sing "*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine...*" This blessing gives strength and encourages steadfastness. Several times in his writing, the apostle Paul spoke of the assurances he had. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, he gives a clear summation of his blessed assurances. In verse 6, he tells that the time of his

departure (death) is at hand. He then gives an overview of his life as a Christian when he says I have "fought," "finished," and have "kept the faith" (Verse 7). In verse 8 the assurance which Paul possesses is comforting; "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." This crown of righteousness is the reward promised to all who love his appearing. This reward is common to all the faithful; it is a promised possession, not only to apostles, but to all them that love his appearing. We can love his appearing only by KNOWING and walking hand-in-hand with God. Those who dread to see the coming of Christ in judgment are not prepared and could not joyfully anticipate His return. To those who KNOW Him, it will be a great and glorious day! We demonstrate our love for him by obeying what he says (1 John 2:3-6; Hebrews 5:9).

#### CONCLUSION.

Not all has been said that is contained in the Bible concerning man's great need to know God. However, the conclusion we must realize is that anyone who does not know God has no hope for eternal life. Paul told the Thessalonian brethren that there would be rest for the faithful. He also spoke of the fate of those who oppose the way of the Lord and trouble the saints. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 makes it very clear; "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Notice destruction is pronounced upon all those who KNOW NOT God and that OBEY NOT the gospel.

God has taken careful steps so as to reveal Himself to all of mankind. We are without excuse. Everyone must make a choice. We either choose to KNOW God or to be eternally lost: John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

#### WORKS CITED

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or contact the

39th Street Church of Christ  
15331 East 39th Street

Independence, MO 64055-4240 USA

# I Know...

## God

by  
Toney L. Smith

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